

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9919

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 2955

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

LIMA FOR ASST SECRETARY KUBISCH

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS BL

SUBJ: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SELCIH AFFAIRS

REF: LA PAZ 2945

BEGIN SUMMARY: SELICH, GENERALLY DISCREDITED IN LIFE DUE TO HIS
EXTREMIST POLITICAL VIEWS, POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND
QUESTIONABLE ETHICS, MAY TAKE ON A SIGNIFICANCE DEAD THAT HE DID NOT
WARRANT ALIVE. ACTIVE MILITARY OFFICERS CONSIDER HIM ONE OF THEIR
OWN AND RESENT HIS DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE CIVILIAN POLICE. THEIR
RESENTMENT, IF NOT HANDLED PROPERLY BY BANZER, MAY CREATE A
SITUATION
WITHIN THE MILITARY SUFFICIENTLY GRAVE TO THREATEN STABILITY.
NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE BANZER SHOULD WEATHER THE STORM. END
SUMMARY.

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1. ANDRES SELICH SEEMS DESTINED TO HAVE A GREATER IMPACT ON THE POLITICAL SCENE AND THE STABILITY OF THE BANZER GOVERNMENT DEAD THAN HE EVER HAD OR WOULD HAVE HAD ALIVE. HIS UNFORTUNATE DEATH, WHICH NO MATTER WHAT THE TRUTH MIGHT BE, IS VIEWED BY FRIENDS AND FOES ALIKE AS MURDER, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE CLANNISH MILITARY OFFICER CORPS, COULD MAKE HIM A MARTYR AND GIVE HIM STATUS IN DEATH HE HAD LOST IN LIFE. MANY FELLOW OFFICERS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND HIS FUNERAL TODAY. THE FACT THAT SELICH DIED WHILE IN CUSTODY OF THE CIVILIAN POLICE, TRADITIONALLY MISTRUSTED BY THE MILITARY, IS CAUSING RESENTMENT BY FELLOW MILITARY OFFICERS. SOME OF THIS RESENTMENT MAY BE RELIEVED IF THE POLICE OFFICERS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE " ACCIDENT "

ARE PUNISHED OR, IF IT COMES TO THAT, MININTERIOR ARCE IS DISMISSED.

2. ALTHOUGH SELICH HAD LOST THE PROFESSIONAL RESPECT OF HIS FELLOW MILITARY OFFICERS DUE TO HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND QUESTIONABLE ETHICS, HE WAS AT ONE TIME ONE OF THEIR OWN-- A PRODUCT OF THE BOLIVIAN

MILITARY INSTITUTION. HE WAS A KEY FIGURE IN THE CHE GUEVARA CAMPAIGN, ONE OF THE FIRST UNIT COMMANDERS TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO THE BANZER REVOLUTION, AND ONE OF THE APPARENT HEROES OF THE BANZER REVOLUTION. (SOME, PARTICULARLY FSB MILITANTS, DISPUTE THIS LATTER POINT, HOWEVER, POINTING OUT THAT SELICH AND HIS RANGERS DID NOT APPEAR IN SANTA CRUZ WHEN THE BANZER REVOLUTION BROKE OUT UNTIL AFTER THE CIVILIANS, MOSTLY FALANGISTAS LED BY CARLOS VALVERDE, HAD SECURED THE CITY, TAKING MANY CASUALTIES IN THE PROCESS.)

3. WHILE SELICH AS A POLITICALLY AMBITIOUS AND SELF- SERVING FIGURE ENJOYED LITTLE SUPPORT FROM MILITARY OR CIVILIAN SECTORS FOR HIS EFFORTS TO OVERTHROW BANZER, HIS EXTREME RIGHTIST, ANTI- COMMUNIST AND ANTI- CIVILIAN, PARTICULARLY ANTI- MNR, VIEWS ARE SHARED BY SOME, POSSIBLY MANY, MILITARY OFFICERS, AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, BY SOME FSB MILITANTS. SELICH' S FAILURE TO WIN GREATER SUPPORT FOR HIS CANDIDACY TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP OF BOLIVIA, OR EVEN OF THE RIGHTISTS, WAS DUE NOT ONLY TO THE EXTREMISM OF HIS VIEWS, BUT MORESO TO HIS FLAMBOYANT MANNER; HIS QUESTIONABLE HONESTY (MANY BELIEVE) HE USED HIS POSITIONS AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND AMBASSADOR TO PARAGUAY TO ENRICH IMSELF FINANCIALLY; HIS LACK OF POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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INTEGRITY (WHILE PUTTING HIMSELF FORTH AS A RIGHTIST IN BOLIVIA, HE WAS ALSO REPORTEDLY SEEKING THE POLITICAL SUPPORT OF EX- PRESIDENT TORRES AND OTHER LEFTIST EXILES IN CHILE); AND THE FACT THAT

MANY, THOUGHT HE WAS MENTALLY UNSTABLE IF NOT CRAZY.

4. SELICH WAS ONE OF THE FIRST HEROES OF THE 1971 BANZER REVOLUTION TO FALL OUT OF FAVOR. HE BALTANTLY USED HIS POSITION AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR TO SEEK POLITICAL SUPPORT AGAINST BANZER. SENT TO PARAGUAY IN JANUARY 1972 IN EXILE AS AMBASSADOR, HE CONTINUED HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITY, AND FOLLOWING HIS DISMISSAL AS AMBASSADOR IN MAY 1972 AND UP UNTIL HIS DEATH, HE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE FREQUENTLY ENTERED BOLIIA CLANDESTINELY TO TRY TO DRUM UP SUPPORT.

5. WHERE HE FAILED IN LIFE, HE MAY HAVE GREATER SUCCESS IN DEATH. WE DO NOT BELIEVE HIS DEATH WILL RESULT IN THE ESTAB
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